R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 018 476 UD 004 689

NORFOLK'S VENTURE INTO EMPATHY.

BY- STEVENS, WILLIAM K.

PUB DATE FEB 67

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.28 5P.

DESCRIPTORS- *SPECIAL PROGRAMS, *DISADVANTAGED YOUTH, *NEGRO STUDENTS, *ELEMENTARY GRADES, *ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT, STUDENT TESTING, GROUPING (INSTRUCTIONAL PURPOSES), COMPENSATORY EDUCATION PROGRAMS, TEACHER ATTITUDES, STUDENT TEACHER RELATIONSHIP, SLUM SCHOOLS, STUDENT IMPROVEMENT,

IN 1962, 43 FIRST-GRADE NEGRO CHILDREN IN AN INNER CITY SCHOOL WERE ENROLLED IN A SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM. TEACHERS VISITED PUPILS' HOMES, LEARNED THEIR SPECIAL INTERESTS, AND DEVELOPED CLOSE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEM. THE PUPILS ENGAGED IN VARIOUS ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES AND LEARNED LANGUAGE SKILLS. THEY WERE TAUGHT IN "FLUID" GROUPS, ALTHOUGH THEIR SCHEDULE WAS HEAVILY STRUCTURED TO GIVE THEM A SENSE OF SECURITY. WHEN THEY ENTERED THE PROGRAM, 16 OF THE CHILDREN WERE CONSIDERED POOR SCHOOL RISKS, 21 WERE RATED AS LOW NORMAL, AND SIX WERE FELT TO BE AVERAGE. AFTER 8 MONTHS SIX WERE RATED AS LOW NORMAL, 26 AS AVERAGE, FOUR AS HIGH AVERAGE, AND SEVEN AS SUPERIOR. AT THE END OF THE 1965-66 SCHOOL YEAR, 27 OF THESE CHILDREN WERE RETESTED AND FOUND TO BE SLIGHTLY ABOVE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE. THIS ARTICLE IS PUBLISHED IN "SOUTHERN EDUCATION REPORT," VOLUME 2, NUMBER 6, JANUARY-FEBRUARY, 1967. (DK)

ED018476

VOLUME 2 • NUMBER 6
JANUARY • FEBRUARY 1967

SOUTHERN EDUCATION REPORT

a magazine for decision-makers

2 A REGIONAL LABORATORY: BROKER FOR BETTERMENT
By John Egerton
The people at CEMREL, one of 20 projects, want to help unify the region's educational resources.

8 TOWARD GROWN-UP LIFE AS THEY'LL REALLY FIND IT
By Kate Erwin
Children are asked what they want to do when they grow up—but what CAN they do?

13 NORFOLK'S VENTURE INTO EMPATHY
By William K. Stevens
Mrs. Browne's program sweeps traditions aside and then underscores pupil-teacher relationships.

17 SOCIO-DRAMA DOES A JOB AT NASHVILLE'S EAST HIGH
By Clayton Braddock
A staff writer for Southern Education Report watched some role-playing.

20 PROFILE: MERIDIAN'S L. O. TODD
By Jim Leeson
A conversation with this Mississippi superintendent soon turns to his community's junior college.

24 FROM WORDS TO SENTENCES
By Reba Wilcoxon
A study by two psychology professors looks for ways to remedy the handicaps of the disadvantaged.

29 GUIDELINES AND A NEW COUNT
By Jim Leeson
Office of Education figures show substantial gains in school desegregation.

ON THE COVER

Photographer Charles Warren captures some of the impact of "socio-drama," a teaching project utilizing role-playing at East High School in Nashville. More such pictures accompany Clayton Braddock's article starting on Page 17.

PICTURE CREDITS

Page 3 (lower) — Office of Public Information, Webster College. Page 9—Eddie Booker. Pages 10 (lower) and 11—Ken Cooke. Pages 12-16—Neal V. Clark Jr. Pages 17-19—Charles Warren. Pages 21, 23—Tim Hammond. Pages 24-28—DARCEE, Peabody College.

The editors of Southern Education Report welcome articles or outlines of articles intended for publication. Manuscripts should be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

One year (10 issues), $3; two years (20 issues), $5.50.

Groups: five or more copies to different addressees, $2.50 each per year; five or more copies to one addressee, $2.25 each per year.

Add 75 cents per year to above rates for orders to be sent outside the United States.

Single copies, any issue, 50 cents each. Ten or more copies, any one issue, to one addressee, 40 cents each.

Southern Education Report is the successor to Southern School News, which was discontinued with the issue of June, 1965. Back-numbers of Southern School News, any available issue, 20 cents each.

MAILING ADDRESS
P.O. Box 6156, Nashville, Tenn. 37212

UD 004 689

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

NORFOLK'S VENTURE INTO EMPATHY

By William K. Stevens

The 43 Negro children who in 1962 entered the first grade at Henry Clay Elementary School near downtown Norfolk, Va., could not have been more typical of the syndrome of the inner city. They came from Tidewater Park, a public-housing development where family income at the time averaged $2,268 a year. They spoke the sub-English of the ghetto. Their prospects for success in school were slim and their futures, at that point, were bleak.

Now, a little more than four years later, most of the children have made tangible progress. They still live in Tidewater Park, but their scores on intelligence tests compare favorably with those of children in any middle-class school across town. When they enter desegregated high schools in Norfolk in 1970, most of them are expected to have little trouble handling the college-preparatory curriculum.

What has happened to them is the result of a carefully executed plan for educating the disadvantaged. Their happy experience, and that of others in their school, still is unusual, an instance of success in the midst of what so far has been a general failure to educate ghetto children.

When the children entered Henry Clay School in 1962, a routine Metropolitan Readiness Test classified 16 of the children (37 per cent) as poor risks for schooling. Twenty-one, or 49 per cent, were rated "low normal." Only six were found by the test to offer average prospects or better. None were "superior."

In the first grade, they were introduced to what at that time was a new kind of schooling in the ghetto, a radical break with educational practice.

Eight months after entering school, the class was given a standardized achievement test. There no longer were any poor risks. Only six fell in the "low normal" class. Twenty-six, or 60 per cent, were "average." Four were "high average," and seven were "superior."

At the end of the 1965-66 school year, 27 of the same children, nearly two-thirds of the original group, still lived in the former Henry Clay School district. It now is served by Tidewater Park Elementary School, which was completed in 1964. Those 27 children took the nationally standardized fourth-grade achievement test in the spring of 1966. It showed the class average in overall school achievement to be a bit above the national norm.

Isolated test results of this kind in some inner-city schools have been looked upon with skepticism. But the Henry Clay-Tidewater Park testing program was carried out under strict conditions and unusually close supervision by the city's director of testing. The testing also was validated by Dr. William F. Brazziel of the Norfolk Division of Virginia State College, a consultant to the U. S. Office of Education on problems of the disadvantaged.

There are dramatic instances of improvement when individual cases are considered. There was the girl who entered school as a poor risk. Her I.Q. at the ▶

William K. Stevens is a staff writer for the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot.

UD 004 689

"The faculty regards its program of 'empathetic teaching' as perhaps the wellspring from which the motivation and procedures flow . . ."

beginning of the second grade was measured at 86. Five months later it was measured at 98. In March, 1966, when the girl was in the sixth month of the fourth grade, the standardized test found her to be performing at a level corresponding to second month of the fifth grade. In the critical area of language proficiency, she was performing at the seventh-grade, third-month level.

What brought about such results?

Tidewater Park School, like Henry Clay before it, under the principalship of Mrs. Irma H. Browne, has done away with much that is traditional in elementary education.

Back in 1959, a Tidewater Park teacher recalled, "we were teaching like mad but weren't getting anywhere." Mrs. Browne and her faculty began to explore why. The Henry Clay faculty met with consultants, planned, talked, and in 1960 embarked on a new course. The Tidewater Park program, as it has since developed, has three main aspects:

- An attempt to widen the horizons of first-grade children and build a foundation for learning through field trips and special activities of the Head Start type. This comes before any child starts formal studies.
- A system of "fluid grouping" in which children stay within grade lines as a matter of administration but move freely from one ability-and-achievement group and one level of work to another, as the teachers and Mrs. Browne deem advisable. It is thus possible to have a third grade in which some students are doing second-grade work and some fifth-grade work.
- Most important, and most intangible, a personal, understanding kind of relationship between pupils and teachers, cultivated at great pains by Mrs. Browne.

The Head Start approach and the ungraded primary have been around for a while, although they were not so prevalent when the Henry Clay experiment started. As important as they are, they are not the crucial factors, in Mrs. Browne's view. Without the proper attitude and approach by the teacher, Mrs. Browne believes, all else is futile.

Teachers often "don't trust (ghetto children) or are afraid of them or think they're incapable of learning," says W. L. Robison, assistant Norfolk school superintendent in charge of instruction. The ghetto school, Robison believes, is likely to be a cold, harsh place of by-the-numbers instruction and authoritarian methods and attitudes. Mrs. Browne sought to substitute for this a system of "empathetic teaching."

Dr. Brazziel, in an article in the *Journal of Negro Education* in the fall of 1964, wrote:

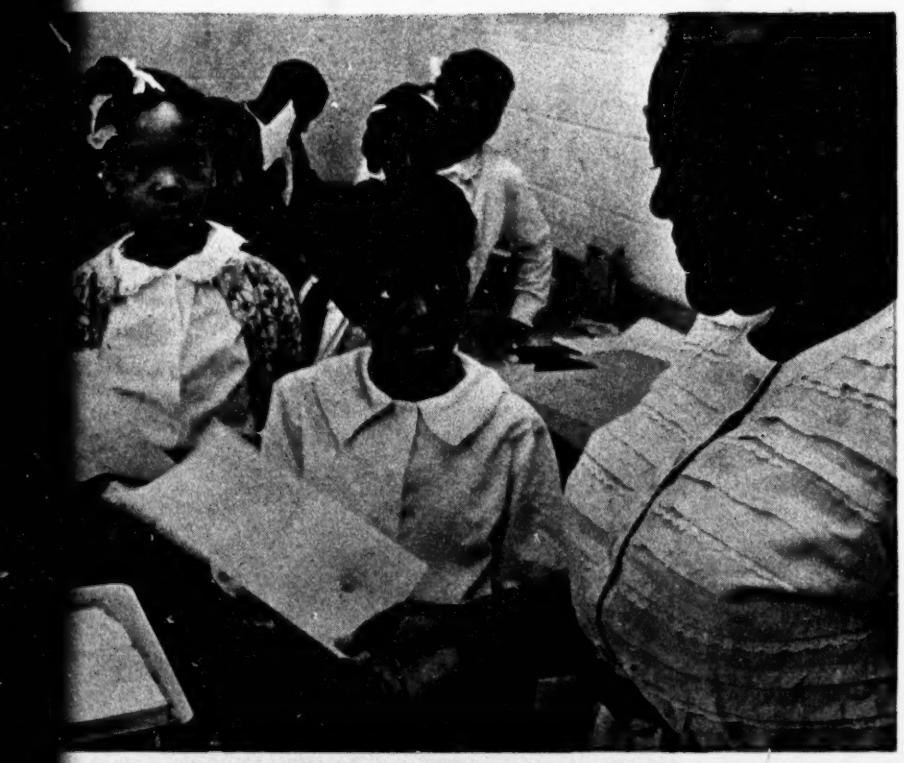
"The faculty regards its program of 'empathetic teaching' as perhaps the wellspring from which the motivation and procedures flow. As such, it feels that such development is of critical importance in programs of this sort."

The starting point was to lead the teachers to understand the kind of child they were dealing with. Teachers visited children's homes over and over to try to learn what made them the way they were; and ultimately, to enter into their world. "Then we had to plan studies that fit into the child's life situation," Mrs. Browne said. "We used the child's interests as a basis."

Equally important was "to establish with the child that we felt he was a person of importance," Mrs. Browne said. "This is a matter of little things. You've got to know the child's name, for example, and use it. And we had to show our faith in the power of education, to convince the child that education is the way out of his situation."

The school was to be an anchor for the child in the unstable, unorganized world of home and street. His time and schedule were heavily structured so he would know what to expect and would be secure. But within this structure, empathetic teaching prevails.

"Our first job was to get the teacher committed to this," Mrs. Browne said. There are regularly sched-▶



Teacher Mrs. Sadye Shaw glances at pupils' work.

"Empathetic teaching . . . is an attempt on the part of the teachers to enter into the world of the disadvantaged child, to see the world through this child's eyes and thus to equip themselves to utilize this child's concepts to develop broader and more accurate concepts; to have this child realize that there is a friendlier world and that there is an opportunity for him to participate in this world and that the avenue to such a participation is high literacy.

"Empathetic teaching means, further, the surveying of the teacher's arsenal of skills in the light of the observed needs of the child and the subsequent acquisition or improvement of the needed skills in-service.

"Finally, empathetic teaching means the sloughing off of traditional or 'approved' methods of teaching and learning. It is the trip during the school day, the teaching of parent child study classes during the night. It is equalitarianism in an enjoyable church visit with an obscure sect and the attendance at a little noted wedding or funeral. It is listening to the bad grammar which enunciates the aspirations of a poverty-ridden parent for his children or the bitterness of one who lashes out against a world which he hopes his child will understand and be able to control better than he."

—William F. Brazziel, Norfolk Division,
Virginia State College.

uled in-service training sessions, usually once a week, at which teachers' approaches, attitudes and methods are discussed. The philosophy and general approach have now become second nature, Mrs. Browne said. "We do these things almost without thinking about them now."

Still, teachers flag when, as often happens, they don't seem to be getting anywhere. "I say to them, 'Yes, but you go on and try and one time it will work,' " Mrs. Browne said. "In one sense we've got a selling program going on all the time."

First-graders at Tidewater Park School spend part of their first year in school in a program similar to Head Start, gaining the kind of intellectual and motor experience children from middle-class homes usually get as a matter of course.

There are frequent field trips, financed at first by local businessmen and community organizations, and more recently by Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The trips form a basis for conversation and the building of vocabulary, which leads to greater language fluency and reading ability.

In the second and third grades, the pupils who entered Henry Clay in 1962 continued to take trips. When they got back to class they were required to write extensively about where they had been and what they had seen and done. They are still required to do so. Most of the papers the children produce are in clear, precise prose showing considerable originality.

It is crucial, Mrs. Browne believes, to get children to overcome the sub-English that is spoken in the ghetto. Unless a child knows the sound of proper English, he is going to have trouble learning to read. "They speak a different language at home," Mrs. Browne said. "We don't scorn it or talk against it, but we do stress the correct." She realizes that children are likely to revert to dialect when they get home. "But I'm not going to worry about that as long as they know the correct way, too."

Mrs. Browne and the teachers feel that without the active support of the parents, gains made by the children in school will evaporate in a home environment hostile to learning. The teachers try to get the parents to come to the school to talk about their children's potentialities, strengths and shortcomings and to instruct them gently in how to foster learning.

"We convinced some, we irritated some, but we kept after them," she said. "Sometimes, when nothing else worked, I'd call the parent's employer and explain what the situation was. The employer almost always would let the parent off work and make him come in."

The final results are not yet in. They will not be, of course, until the children get into high school, graduate, and enter the world, and until the approach is tried more extensively.

But the Tidewater Park program just could be a model for the future. O